

**Walking my hometown: Practices of everyday
nationalism in contemporary Japan**

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I certify that all parts of this thesis are my own original work, except where otherwise stated.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the people I met in the last four years during my PhD program at The Australian National University chronologically for their support, understanding, and inspiration.

As soon as I arrived in Canberra, the capital city of Australia, I met a young Japanese Aborigine historian, Hokari Minoru who was just three years older than I was and had just completed his PhD thesis at the ANU. He also agreed to become a member of my supervisory panel. In those days, I was going to deal with the rise of neo-nationalism in Japan by solely focusing on texts and discourses. It was Hokari Minoru who triggered me to engage in fieldwork research which I had no experience with at that time. Brought up in Japanese society in the same age, he also shared the critical sense of the rise of neo-nationalism in Japan with me. One day, at Chats café on the campus, he said:

“What you want to deal with is, for example, the nationalism of young people who sit anywhere such as on the floor of trains or parking lots or convenience stores in their banal everyday life, right? If you want deal with such phenomena, why don't you just interview them directly?”

Being inspired by his above suggestion, I decided to engage in fieldwork research in order to deal with the practice of nationalism in everyday life.

In developing my theoretical framework of the practice of nationalism in everyday life, I encountered an article written by Kutsuwada Ryūzō in the journal *Gendai Shisō*. By coincidence, I met him in Canberra, and he became a good friend who stimulated me intellectually. It was coincidental again that he got a job in a university in my hometown, Okayama and now we are working together to foster a multicultural environment in Okayama.

As the subject of my research, I selected my friends in my hometown. I asked Sanda Katsuyuki, who is my high school classmate, and I was permitted to engage in fieldwork at a small company engaged in the sewage consulting, Sanyō Consultant,

which Katsuyuki's father Sanda Tadimitsu manages and Katsuyuki works. Without the support from Katsuyuki based on our friendship for more than ten years, I could not continue to maintain my motivation to engage in fieldwork at a small company in my hometown. Needless to say, the support and understanding of his father and other employees was essential in continuing my research smoothly. Also, I would like to thank my friends in hometown who played and drank with me, and answered my interviews patiently.

I lived in Okayama for eighteen years but I did not have any Zainichi Korean friends. It was Lee Bochang who supported me to deepen my interest and understanding toward Zainichi Koreans. Without Chang-Ho, I could not encourage myself to research and organize multicultural events in Okayama. Above all, the friendship that we established deepened my commitment to Zainichi Koreans. Also, I would like to thank Kim Taesik who helped me to research the Sōren community and also discussed academic issues with me.

My mother, Kawabata Hiroko passed away on 10 March 2003 during my fieldwork research. I still do not know what to do with my sorrow and memories about her. One thing that I can certainly be aware of is that she encourages me to be "open" to "Others". Her death taught me a very simple yet difficult lesson: that I should deepen what I really feel passionate about. Losing my mother, who I lay my trust on, I learned how to trust "Others".

My mother's death brought a great shock to my family. We could not throw ourselves to believe the illusion of a "good" family anymore. Nevertheless, my father Kawabata Hideo continued to work hard and supported me financially and my sister Kawabata Michiko kept her passion and creativity to make films. Above all, my father and sister understood and supported me with profound attachment. Besides the ideology of family, this thesis could not be completed without the love of my father, sister, and deceased mother. It did not impose on me an exclusive ideology of love and family but taught me the way to love "Others".

Having completed my fieldwork research in my hometown, I came back to Canberra in the beginning of January 2004. Hokari Minoru was struggling with malignant lymphoma since the winter of 2003. I often visited his hospital in Melbourne, and struggled with his disease along with my friends Shiobara Yoshikazu, Ken and Julia

Yonetani, his parents, and his sister Yuki. He passed away on 10 May 2004 but completed his first but last monograph, *Radikaru oral historee* (Radical oral history) which I was tremendously inspired by when writing this thesis. I still cannot accept his death fully. Without a doubt, he still inspires me intellectually as well as spiritually even without his physical existences

My main supervisor Akami Tomoko, and co-supervisors: Tessa Morris-Suzuki, Julia Yonetani, and Noah McCormack supported and guided me to write my thesis from the beginning of my course, and even more profoundly after the death of Hokari Minoru. My main supervisor, Akami Tomoko supervised me patiently and encouraged me to continue my work. She was generous with both her time and her comments right to the very end of this project. Tessa Morris-Suzuki always gave me accurate and considerate comments based on her profound wisdom and knowledge, and was tolerant of my writing styles and language. I could not continue my motivation to complete my academic missions without all of their warm support, encouragement, and understanding. My two young supervisors, Julia Yonetani and Noah McCormack, always intellectually inspired me in a friendly manner. Also, I would like to thank who revised my English which might have otherwise been very difficult to read: Maxine Macarthur, Tessa Morris-Suzuki, Noah McCormack, Timothy Amos, and Steve Jarvis. I must note that they did not only correct my English vocabulary and grammar but also co-authored with me through their participation in translating from Japanese to English.

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Finally, I would like to thank my readers who “contingently” picked up my thesis.

Abstract

This thesis questions the nationalism that is practiced in everyday life, which the conventional studies of nationalism have not fully dealt with. As a series of case studies, I deal with the rise of neo-nationalism in contemporary Japanese society. In particular, I focus on the 'border-creation' that is practiced in the everyday lives of people through labour and consumption. The people who are living in advanced capitalist states in the age of global information capitalism do not exclaim "hot nationalism" but rather consume "cool nationalism".

In examining the practice of nationalism in everyday life, I selected my friends in my hometown, Okayama as research subjects. I lived and worked with them, and experienced the mechanism of everyday border creation together. I selected my friends from Okayama because they are "Japanese" who live in my past memories and experiences. In order to critically question my Japanese identity, I wanted to rethink the academic term nationalism from the cases of my friends who I feel familiar to and thought that I know very well.

However, it is not only "Japanese" who are living in my hometown. There are more than 7,000 Zainichi Koreans living in Okayama. Zainichi Koreans are the largest minority group in Japan. Within this ethnic identity, third and fourth-generation young Zainichi Koreans are inclined to assimilate into Japanese society. They adapt themselves to information capitalism and a consumer-oriented society. Meanwhile, however, the social discrimination against them still exists. They are exposed to the border where the politics of inclusion and exclusion find their balance.

While conventional ethnic studies tend to focus on either the 'majority' or 'minority', this thesis focuses on the interactions and linkages between the 'majority' and 'minority'. In consumer-oriented society, residence and lifestyle are increasingly becoming similar to each other. While 'majority' or 'minority' communities are dismantling, their lifestyles have become 'individualized'. In that sense, through focusing on the interactions and linkages between the two groups, it is possible to identify a critical cooperation between the two within a consumer-oriented Japanese society in the age of global information capitalism.

Through the encounters with my friends and Zainichi Koreans in my hometown, the idea of “Japanese”, “hometown”, and “friends” is critically questioned. Then, the “familiar” landscape of my hometown becomes something “unfamiliar”.

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